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WHERE ARE OUR NATION'S CREDENTIALS?

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BY

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ALTHOUGH four years have passed since the matter of establishing a National Archives Building in which to deposit all government documents which are not in active use for the purpose of administration (those to remain in the department to which they were sent) was presented before the United States Senate by Mr. Williams in the behalf of the Department of Archives and History of the states of Mississippi and Alabama, and although Congress has done nothing except publish the petition at the expense of the Government, the spirit of the movement is still alive. There seems never to have been a systematic plan of archives for public documents in the United States, which accounts for the ease with which documents have been lost, mislaid, destroyed, not deposited in any archive at all or deliberately taken away. The present movement is to check destruction and to preserve for the Nation her credentials. Many of the individual states are already providing for the safeguarding and the preservation of their public documents now on file as well as for the collection of those which have been lost. Their activity in this respect has been openly demonstrated from time to time by injunctions against auction sales of the public documents of their respective states.

The recent temporary injunction against the sale of New Hampshire state papers at public auction, procured by the Attorney General of that state, recalls to mind long lists of important papers, letters and documents which belong by right to either the United States government or to the individual state governments, but which, on the contrary, are bought and sold freely through public auctions. These papers belong in the public archives and are parts of the authentic records of the history of our country—state and nation. The minute records of no other country, perhaps, are guarded so loosely as are those of the United States. This carelessness is not just recently acquired, but is of long standing, as de Tocqueville attested when he wrote on his return to France from his visit here: "The authority which public men possess in America is so brief, and they are so soon commingled with the ever-changing population of the country, that the acts of a community frequently leave fewer traces than the occurrences of a private family. The public administration is, so to speak, oral and traditionary. But little is committed to writing, and that little is wafted away forever, like the leaves of the Sibyl, by the smallest breeze.

"The only historical remains in the United States are the newspapers, but if a number be wanting, the chain of time is broken, and the present is severed from the past, I am convinced that in fifty years it will be more difficult to collect

authentic documents concerning the social conditions of the Americans at the present day than it is to find remains of the administration of France during the Middle Ages; and if the United States were ever invaded by barbarians, it would be necessary to have recourse to the history of other nations in order to learn anything of the people which now inhabits them.

"The instability of the administration has penetrated into the habits of the people: it even appears to suit the general taste, and no one cares for what occurred before his time. No methodical system is pursued; no archives are formed; and no documents are brought together when it would be very easy to do so. Where they exist, little store is set upon them; and I have among my papers several original public documents which were given to me in answer to some of my inquiries. In America society seems to live from hand to mouth, like an army in the field."

We are awakening to find that the prophecy which the young Frenchman made nearly a hundred years ago has come true. If we wished to compile a history of our government from original documents, we should have as great a job on our hands as if we set out to gather up a handful of mustard seeds we had just blown into the wind. The majority of our state papers seem to have passed into private collections. The "Minutes of the Continental Congress" have been spread broadcast by the hundreds till they attract neither great attention nor great price. Indeed, so accustomed have we Americans become to the sale of our "State documents" that we made little comment when the "original and engrossed copy of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States" was advertised and offered for sale at public auction, a document second only in importance to the Constitution itself. Beneath a full size facsimile of the Amendment the auctioneer has printed the following explanation: "To understand the value of this precious document we must take into consideration that this is the seal attached to the document which is registered in Heaven, to promulgate which, so many thousands of our beloved brothers gave up their lives on the field of battle.

That the great Lincoln foresaw the importance of this act, is fully attested from the fact that this original and engrossed copy of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States was prepared for him, at his request, and signed by all members of the Senate and Congress who voted for it. The signatures were obtained by a friend of the President, but before the parchment could be delivered Lincoln had been assassinated. The parchment remained in the possession of his friend, and at his death passed into the hands of the

executors of his estate, the late Judge Hayden, from whom the late Colonel Donaldson obtained it.

"Next to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, it is the most important document relating to our government and registers one of the most important and bravest acts of the civilized world. It is hoped that it will find a fitting resting place.

"During the latter part of the life of Colonel Donaldson, a scheme was on foot, and being managed by the late Doctor Pepper, to secure the document for the University of Pennsylvania, several gentlemen had contributed $500.00 each towards the purchase, but the untimely death of Colonel Donaldson and Doctor Pepper put an end to all negotiations." (For this document a bid of $1700.00 was withdrawn—refused.)

There should be but one resting place for public documents—and that place—public archives.

What are our public documents when they can be bought and sold as quaint and curious relics, when they are considered to have fulfilled their duty as soon as the last signature has been placed upon them and that they are therefore useless except as curiosities in museums public or private, more often the latter? The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States together with all its amendments, belong to the people of the United States, and are supposed to be properly cared for at the National Capitol, the chief seat of government. They were never intended to be trafficked from one private individual to another. Public documents are always needful for the maintenance of public liberty and justice—copies of these documents lack strength.

Boundary lines are most important, and it may happen that on some occasion the letter written by John Habersham, Savannah, March 22, 1787, signed also by George Lachlan McIntosh and John Houston and sent to Governor George Matthews in reference to settling the boundary lines between the states of South Carolina and Georgia, may be as urgently needed as in 1842, one hundred and sixty years afterwards, it was found necessary to produce the **original** lease from James, Duke of York, of the "Town of Newcastle and a circle of twelve miles around to William Penn," dated Aug. 21, in the four and thirtieth year of the reign of Charles the Second (1682), signed by James, Duke of York, afterwards King of England, in order to prove conclusively the title of the State of Delaware to Pea Patch Island, the island on which Fort Delaware has been built. It was a celebrated case and the document a highly important one.

In the same sale in which the lease of "the Town of Newcastle and a circle of twelve miles around" was sold, there was

sold also the original "Charter of Liberties granted by William Penn to the Province of Pennsylvania, dated 25 April, 1682." This is only one charter among the many which have passed and are passing through the hands of auctioneers.

A short time previous, the original survey of "Lands patented in the name of George Washington, on the Ohio River" was sold by the same auctioneer. Another relic of the great Washington, one which by every right belongs to the most sacred archives of our country, is—"the original manuscript military order book (all in his own autograph) from June 22 to August 8, 1779." The auctioneer says of it: "This is one of the most interesting and highly important historical documents I have ever had pass through my hands. The book is all in the handwriting of General Washington, and contains the orders issued by him as Commander-in-Chief of the Continental forces during the most trying period of the Revolutionary War, June 22-August 8, 1779. With the exception of a few extracts the book has never been published, and it is well known by collectors as the celebrated 'Order Book,' which contains his stringent order against 'swearing in camp.' The historical data to be found within its pages will help fill many a gap in the history of that eventful period, and I think I am safe in saying that this will, in all probabilty, be the last opportunity that anybody will have of possessing a relic of the greatest of all men as interesting and as important as this." (Sold for $275.00.) One notable example of how our priceless documents have been disposed of even abroad, is evidenced by the fact that the original plan of the Valley Forge Encampment made by Dupor-Tail, General Washington's Chief Staff Engineer, in 1778, was found by Ex-Governor Pennypacker in a museum in Antwerp. It was purchased by the University of Cornell and now is in the library of that institution instead of in the National Archives Department in Washington. This is, perhaps, the only plan of the encampment in existence. Another letter of great interest and importance is a letter to the Governor of New York from Henry Fox, First Lord Holland, Secretary of War and Secretary of State, Whitehall, March 13, 1756, "In relation to the plans for conducting the War in America. The mode of raising troops in the Colonies. The prohibition of any trade or commerce with the French, etc."

These records, which deal with the great epoch-making events in the development of our country, especially those recording what took place in the severing of ties to the mother-country and how the present method of government was established, should be religiously protected by the American people as a whole for the generations succeeding them, should not be bought and laid away in some vault as a money-making investment for the son of some financier.

Besides General Washington's "Order Book," there is General Moultries' "Oderly Book," also kept during the Revolutionary War, June 20, 1775, to December 6, 1776, telling of the defense of Fort Sullivan (now Moultrie), in Charleston Harbor, against the British fleet. In the same sale were two "Orderly Books," kept during the War of 1812—that of General Winchester, Commander of the Northwestern Army—and that of the Kentucky Volunteers under Isaac Shelby, Governor of Kentucky. These are records of the maneuvers of the armies, plans of battles, etc., historical records which, once lost, can never be replaced. Together with these was sold the "Livre de Bord de Pierre Joseph Jennet." The original log book of the French Frigates "Lyon" and "Zele" during the American Revolution, "containing many most interesting and hitherto unpublished details of the French Fleet, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay and the West Indies. About 275 pages of manuscript. Circa, 1777-1780.

"This is one of the most important Revolutionary manuscripts, being the log book kept by an officer of the French Fleet (Pierre Joseph Jennet) during the operations in the Chesapeake and St. Kitts and the other West Indian Islands. It gives a complete list of all the important battleships of both the French and English Fleets, their armament, names of officers, size, etc., and illustrates the size in a series of ten water-color drawings (mostly folding) of the vessels both in action and otherwise. It is also interspersed with valuable data relating to the siege of York, the surrender of Cornwallis and other important events in the American Revolution, including many interesting details hitherto unknown. It will be well to mention that the Frigate 'Zele' was one of the most celebrated French ships in the American Revolution, taking part in nearly all the naval engagements of that period, and especially in the Chesapeake Bay."

Then again it would seem right that the following letter from General Washington, Commander-in-Chief of the American Army during the Revolution, to Lord Cornwallis, dated "Headquarters Camp at Middle Brook, June 2, 1777, be filed with the other data of the same period.

"My Lord,

It is with infinite regret that I am again compelled to remonstrate against that spirit of wanton cruelty that has in several instances influenced the conduct of your soldiery. A recent exercise of it towards an unhappy officer of ours, Lieutenant Martin, convinces me, that my former representations on that subject, have been unvailing. That Gentleman, by the fortunes of war, on Saturday last, was thrown into the hands of a party of your horse and unnecessarily murdered with the most aggravated circumstances of barbarity. I wish not to wound your lordship's feelings by commenting on this event, but I feel it my duty to send his mangled body

to your lines as an undeniable testimony of the fact should it be doubted, and as the best appeal to your Humanity for the justice of our complaint.

I have the honor to be with due respect
Your Lordship's most obedient servant
George Washington."

Authentic records of our early struggle for existence are scarce enough. They should have no price levied upon them by speculators in the field of manuscripts and rare editions.

All letters on official business ought to belong to the office and not to the man, and should be filed in public archives in the department to which they belong, but it would seem that a tacit understanding of a reverse policy is responsible for the sale of such letters as: "An official letter to the President of the United States from the President of Chili, Manuel Montt, dated Santiago, Nov. 14, 1853."

Two famous petitions from the two most famous prisons of the Civil War, sent to the President of the Union, are not filed away in the War Department as they ought to have been, and as Mr. Taft, when asked how they had been disposed of, suggested they probably were; both these petitions from the prisoners of the Andersonville Prison and the prisoners of the Charlestown Prison, were sold at public auction a few years ago. Now they are held as valuable papers by private individuals, but not as sacred documents of the American people by the American people for the American people.

One lot of six pieces by Robert Morris, the great financier of the Revolution, in regard to the finances of the Revolution (dated Jan. 8, March 9, May 13, Oct. 21, 1782; May 12, Sept. 16, 1783), invaluable as public records, were purchased by a collector for $.25 (twenty-five cents). Another letter, which would undoubtedly enlighten us in respect to the financial conditions of the young country, was the letter to John Steele, Comptroller of the United States, from President Thomas Jefferson, on financial matters.

A resolution of Congress August 3, 1780, in reference to the removal of the loan offer from the states of South Carolina and Georgia during the invasion by the British: again, another abstract dated October 10, 1780, in relation to bonds that may be ceded to the United States by the different states: then again, another abstract dated February 20, 1783, a resolution relative to the foods imported for the use of German and British prisoners of war—all three documents signed by Charles Thomson, Secretary of the Continental Congress: besides, there is an estimate of monies loaned to the United States at certain periods, and reduced to specie value by the table of deprecation —dated Auditor General's Office, February 16, 1781: and from Delaware, an abstract from the minutes of the Assembly of

Delaware empowering the Commander-in-Chief to draw for 10,000 pounds for debts due the militia, and a resolution of the same Assembly, dated September 2, 1775, to raise 3,000 pounds to purchase arms and ammunition for the defense of the colony, both signed by James Booth, Clerk of the Assembly of Delaware; every one of these papers would be priceless in piecing together our financial records, yet perhaps the highest price paid for any one was the $1.00 (one dollar) paid for the resolution of the Assembly of Delaware dated September 2, 1775.

The loss of muster rolls and resignations shows an indifference in the government towards its patriots. A good example of the resignations from the army and the navy is that of General Robert E. Lee at the outbreak of the Civil War, that letter in which he surrendered his commission in the army of the United States; dated "Arlington, Washington city, P. O. 20 April, 1861—to Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, Commanding the Army.

"Gen'l

Since my interview with you on the 18th inst. I have felt that I ought not longer to retain my commission in the Army. I therefore tender my resignation, which I request you will recommend for acceptance.

It would have been tendered at once but for the struggle it cost me to separate myself from a Service to which I have devoted all the best years of my life, all the Ability I possessed.

During the whole of that time, more than thirty years, I have experienced nothing but kindness from my superiors, the most cordial friendship from my Companions. To no one general have I been so much indebted as to yourself for uniform kindness and consideration, and it has always been my ardent desire to merit your approbation.

I shall carry with me to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration and your name and fame will always be near and dear to me. Save in the defense of my Native State, I never desire again to draw my Sword.

Be pleased to accept my most earnest wishes for the continuance of your happiness and believe me most truly yours

R. E. Lee."

Amongst other letters of resignation which it seems right should be in public archives to fill out the annals of our country is the letter of John M. Schofield, Secretary of War, dated Washington, March 11, 1869. But this, too, was sold at public auction.

Arthur St. Claire, President of the Continental Congress, sent a letter to the Governor of New Jersey, dated April 13, 1781, respecting the treaty of peace between the United States and Great Britain and the duty of every state in enforcing the treaty:

From the office of Finance, January 8, 1782, Robert Morris wrote to the President of Pennsylvania, informing him of the incorporation by Congress of the Bank of North America, and speaking of the great benefits the bank will confer:

John Hancock wrote to Thomas Pickering a communication to the state of South Carolina, dated Boston, February 16, 1788, giving notice of the ratification of the Constitution of the United States by Massachusetts, and asking concurrence in several amendments:

Winfield Scott, Commander-in-Chief of the United States Army, while at Headquarters in Augusta, January 31, 1836, wrote to Governor William Schley, of Georgia, calling on him for troops to act against the Seminole Indians in Florida:

An official report of the Battle of Gainsville, Va., August 28, 1862, and of Bull Run, August 29-30, 1862, sent from Headquarters by Abner Doubleday:

A letter signed by twelve members of the Confederate Congress sent from North Carolina, dated January 25, 1864, to Governor Z. E. Vance, a document of great historical importance because in reference to entering into negotiations for terminating the war:

8 A. M., May 11, 1864, General Grant wrote from Headquarters in Virginia to Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:

The members of the General Assembly of Tennessee sent a petition to President Andrew Johnson, praying that he cause the Sixth Regiment Tenn. Cavalry to be mounted and sent into West Tennessee to assist the people in establishing Law and Order and Bring to Justice the Marauding Bands and Guerrilas, dated Nashville, May 6, 1865, signed by thirty-one members of the Legislature, this was endorsed on the back "Executive office, May 15, 1865, respectfully referred to Lieutenant General Grant who will please grant the request—Andrew Johnson." (Sold for $1.50.) All of these and hundreds more of communications from one official to another, from one state department to another, are found listed in auctioneers' catalogues, together with notifications of laws and oaths of office as that of Daniel D. Tompkins, "Signed three times, July 1, 1831. The three separate oaths of office taken by him on his inauguration as Governor of New York."

And the oaths of office signed twice by George Clinton, upon his inauguration as Governor of New York, July 1, 1801.

Then pages from the minutes of the various departments as: "An original page from the manuscript minutes of the Legislature of New Jersey, containing the resolution concerning sending commissioners to the New Haven convention to regulate labour, manufactures, etc., signed by John Hart as

speaker of the House," have for years been sold at public auctions, not to mention the letters and documents which pass from one collector to another in consideration of a good, round profit minus the auctioneer's fee.

There was sold also "extracts from the resolutions of the Continental Congress relating to the supplies for the army and mentioning Washington, dated September 15, 1780," together with the memoranda also signed by Charles Thomson, February 21, 1784, of the states which were represented in the Federal Congress from February 7 to 21, 1784, showing how difficult it was to get a full attendance. "From February 7 to 21, the highest number of states represented was seven and the lowest five, and the states of New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina and Georgia were not represented at all."

Not a whit less interesting and valuable is the report of General Jonathan Williams, United States Commercial Agent at France, to the Commissioner of the United States, dated Nantes, July 30, 1775, in reference to prizes at French ports.

The original of the first Thanksgiving Proclamation by a President of the United States, issued and signed by George Washington on the third day of October, 1789, and

The original draft of the celebrated Resolutions in the Virginia House of Burgesses, May, 1765, against the Stamp Act, by Patrick Henry, ought to be in public archives.

A few of the letters which should be in the departments to which they were sent, but which were sold at public auction for a mere song, are—

May 4, 1795, to the chief coiner of the Mint. from David Rittenhouse, first Director of the United States Mint:

Nicholas Biddle, President of the Bank of the United States, to John H. Eaton, Secretary of War, respecting matters of that institution:

President John Tyler, June 22, 1842, to Mr. Spencer, Secretary of War, in relation to Dorr's Rebellion:

General R. E. Lee, August 12, 1861, to General S. Cooper, in reference to exchanging of prisoners:

Major General Edmund Pendleton Gaines, 1841, to Hon. John C. Spencer, urging that proper and effective increase be taken to provide for the national defense:

John Quincy Adams, President, August 14, 1794, to the Secretary of State in regard to his mission to The Hague.

A lot of papers relating to the early history of Pennsylvania—the return of prisoners, etc., sold for $.87 (eighty-seven cents).

A lot of documents relating to the Mexican War brought $.15 (fifteen cents).

Another lot relating to the Mexican War and signed prin-

cipally by Major U. S. Bliss, consisting of military orders, etc., attracted only $.20 (twenty cents).

A collection of documents and letters relating to Pennsylvania in the War of 1812, and signed by Governor Snyder, sold for a mere song.

Old treaties with the Indians and others are worthless to the nation, so it seems, when they are sold in lump lots as "Lot 4—Official letters, documents, etc., about 600."—"Lot—Deeds, Bonds, Commissions, Treaties, etc.—"

One treaty which must have been unusually valuable, brought $4.00 (four dollars)—"Timothy Pickering, Quartermaster General of the Revolutionary War and Secretary of State, Philadelphia, Dec. 22, 1795, Treaty with the Wyandottes, Delawares, Shawanoes, Ottawas and other Indians."

De Tocqueville was right when he wrote that the only true historical records that the United States will possess are the newspapers, and if a number be missing then a link in the chain is gone. From the very beginning we seem to have given our original documents to whomsoever asked for them, and that the recipients were not restricted to Americans is shown by the fact that such documents are listed in the catalogues of auction sales in foreign countries. In the light of the frequency with which our public documents are met in auctions in this and other countries, it is strange how few of the public documents of other countries are sold. At a meeting of "Archivists" in New York a few years ago, we were told that in France all officials **must** leave all papers relating to their office with the State at the expiration of their term. That official papers found amongst the effects of a deceased, or papers and documents found anywhere and which could be proved to have belonged to public archives or to be State documents could be seized upon by the State.

It isn't France alone that has a system of Public Archives, and maintains a State ownership for State papers, but nearly every country in Europe has a Repository for Public Documents, where they are classified and cared for till needed. The British Museum and the Heralds Office in London contain records for a thousand years which are so accurately arranged as to be available easily for either historical purposes or as evidence in court. Compare with this the "hundred inadequate and unsuitable repositories in the City of Washington" where our public documents are "packed in boxes" and are available for neither historical or administrative purposes. It has been said that the Government pays $50,000 annually for the use of these buildings which are neither fireproof nor suitable. The dampness, the dust, moths and mildew cause disintegration to set in among the papers packed in the cellars

and garrets and thus many valuable papers are lost to us forever when a little care and sunlight and fresh air would preserve them.

Strange to say, it seems never to have occurred to the United States government that the letters and State papers of the Confederate States were of any importance whatever to the Federal Government, that they possessed any value as historical records in the development of the Nation. Their value was little. To historical societies and collectors they meant curious relics and not priceless documents which were of vital importance in the maintenance of the Federal Government. Recently the United States Government seems to be awakening to a realization of the value of these documents and now it is said that it intends to buy up the letters and papers of General P. G. T. Beauregard which are to be sold soon at public auction.

On the title page of his catalogue, a reproduction of which is given here, the auctioneer shows the importance he attributes to these Confederate papers.

The Beauregard Papers

[General P. G. T. Beauregard of the Confederate States Army)

Being the Letters of the various Confederate Generals to him, and his Autograph and official copies of his own letters in answer

THE WHOLE FORMING

A South-side History of the War

From the First Preparations against Fort Sumter to the Surrender of Genl. Jos. E. Johnston

Embracing Important Letters from the Generals who commanded in Virginia, The Carolinas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky and Florida, all of them containing more or less information about Battles, Military Movements, and affairs relating to the organization of the Confederate States Army

The most historically important collection ever offered for sale on the subject

TO BE SOLD

Monday Afternoon and Evening, Oct. 25, 1915,

AT 2.30 AND 8.00 O'CLOCK P. M.

ORDER OF SALE:

First Sitting,	- -	Lots 1 to 500
Second "	- -	" 501 to end

These papers consist of official reports of battles and movements of the armies, of plans of battles as well as letters and they are true historical records. The introductory remarks of the auctioneer in his catalogue evidences the great importance he lays upon the value of keeping these papers together inviolate. "It is probable that many of the letters herein enumerated will be lost or destroyed, as in a short time they will be scattered through the medium of an auction to the four quarters of the earth, consequently I have copied their contents for the use of history, and therefore the catalogue should be preserved for such use, and those interested in the history of the Civil War should read it thoroughly.

"Part two of this correspondence, of which I am preparing a catalogue, will embrace the letters to General Beauregard, of Southern Generals immediately after the war, and Northern Generals during the war. The letters from the various Governors of the Southern States, the official Correspondence from the various officers of the Confederate Government, nearly five thousand military telegrams, many important reports of battles, including those of Bull Run, Manassas (the second Bull Run) and Shiloh which is really the **only report on that battle from either side, in existence,** several hundred war maps and plans of battles, etc., etc.

But then the United States has not taken care of the official reports of the battles or the plans of the battles or the letters to and from the commanders of the armies of any war, if the descriptions of these documents given in the auctioneers' catalogues speak true, and it seems not unlikely that they do when the prices paid for them are considered. There are official reports of battles and plans of battles of every war in which the United States has indulged from the Revolutionary (and before) to the Spanish-American which have been purchased by some collector and hidden in an obscure corner where they will be a benefit to nobody.

It is unwise for a nation to give away her State papers which are her credentials, her munitions. The law requires every man to show upon demand his certificates of birth, vaccination, school, marriage, divorce, etc., hence he guards them carefully. The credentials of the United States are her State papers and they are being sold and resold without restriction among private individuals to whom they represent no more than the money invested. There are far too many papers of which, pressed by necessity, the United States could show only copies. In the light of all these facts, it seems a duty incumbent upon the present government to make and enforce laws for the filing of all official papers, letters and documents in the archives of the departments to which they belong, and to require that they remain on the files ready to be produced at a

moment's notice, so long as they are in active use for the purposes of administration, thereafter to be placed in a Public Archives Building where they should be classified and cared for properly.

It has been said that some of the prominent auctioneers have standing orders with some of the government clerks to procure for them for a nominal fee, letters, &c., bearing certain autographs. **IF** this be true, then it is high time for the government to check this ruthless rifling of its files of public documents, in spite of the assertion that "such papers have done their duty and are not worth anything except to a collector. That they only clutter up." Such a law may hamper the auctioneers' business slightly, but it will preserve for her the Nation's credentials, many of the earliest of which are resting in various parts of the globe. Only a hundred and forty years have passed since the signing of the Declaration of Independence and yet many of the important documents of our early history have been lost, destroyed or fallen into the hands of private individuals throughout the world. These precious relics of our infant nation will enhance in value and interest as time runs on. Individual states are recognizing this fact and are collecting and preserving all documents of public character. The state of New Jersey is now and has been for some time past, engaged in compiling and publishing all the data filed in the various offices as well as compilations and extracts from newspapers and advertisements of changes in the schedules of steam-boats and stage-coaches between New York, Philadelphia and the South, and advertisements of lotteries for building churches and colleges and rewards for run-away slaves—all of which are invaluable. They are particularly interesting as New Jersey is one of the thirteen original states or rather colonies and the matters mentioned are res domesticae—household history of that period. This activity is not restricted to New Jersey alone, but is carried on in many other states.

The interest shown by the separate states in forming archives for their state documents gives confidence that the movement for protecting our National Documents in a National Archives Building in Washington will succeed, gives hope that the petty jealousy amongst the various departments and the added jealousy between the candidates for the honor of accomplishing such a Herculean task will vanish and all will work together for the ultimate good of the Nation. As the process of construction is slower and less visible than that of destruction, the establishing of such an institution is slower than the demolishing would be.

That AMERICANS and historians are working together for that end is shown not only by the above mentioned petition before Congress and the injunctions against auction sales of

state papers, but also by papers read before the American Historical Society and by articles which have appeared from time to time in the press. It seems incredible that these priceless and sacred relics which give the history of the epochal period of our country's formation and of its great internal struggles should be huckstered about as if they were the original manuscript copies of poems and novels instead of invaluable evidences of a great nation's history.

There remains but one step for the present government to take to preserve her credentials—and that is the **IMMEDIATE** passage of a bill through Congress to establish an Archives Department for housing such documents after they have fulfilled their immediate purposes and until they are called upon as historical data or evidence in time of trouble. Every Senator and Representative in the United States Congress, the President and his Cabinet, and the Governor of each individual state should become interested in the immediate passage of such a bill through Congress. To the Colonial Dames, the Sons and the Daughters of the Revolution, the Grand Army of the Republic and kindred organizations the passage of the bill should strongly appeal and they should either by securing a resolution of the individual state Legislatures recommending their representatives to vote for such a bill or urge their representatives personally to have it passed.

The immediate passage of such a Bill for the establishing of a National Archives Building for all State papers now on file, and for collecting and depositing therein those which are "scattered to the four quarters of the earth" would not only be a most patriotic act of the present Congress—but would also fulfill a long neglected duty—that of preserving for all generations of Americans their inheritance from their American forefathers—their historic State papers.

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